

DEFENSE BASE ACT

[PUBLIC—No. 208—77TH CONGRESS, PASSED AUGUST 16, 1941,
AS AMENDED]

S. 1642

An Act To provide compensation for disability or death to persons employed at military, air, and naval bases outside the United States.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. COMPENSATION AUTHORIZED

(a) Places of employment.

Except as herein modified, the provisions of the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, as amended, shall apply in respect to the injury or death of any employee engaged in any employment—

(1) at any military, air, or naval base acquired after January 1, 1940, by the United States from any foreign government; or

(2) upon any lands occupied or used by the United States for military or naval purposes in any Territory or possession outside the continental United States (including the United States Naval Operating Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and the Canal Zone; or

(3) upon any public work in any Territory or possession outside the continental United States (including the United States Naval Operating Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and the Canal Zone), if such employee is engaged in employment at such place under the contract of a contractor (or any subcontractor or subordinate subcontractor with respect to the contract of such contractor) with the United States; but nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to apply to any employee of such a contractor or subcontractor who is engaged exclusively in furnishing materials or supplies under his contract;

(4) under a contract entered into with the United States or any executive department, independent establishment, or agency thereof (including any corporate instrumentality of the United States), or any subcontract, or subordinate contract with respect to such contract, where such contract is to be performed outside the continental United States and at places not within the areas described in subparagraphs (1), (2), and (3) of this subdivision, for

the purpose of engaging in public work, and every such contract shall contain provisions requiring that the contractor (and subcontractor or subordinate contractor with respect to such contract) (1) shall, before commencing performance of such contract, provide for securing to or on behalf of employees engaged in such public work under such contract the payment of compensation and other benefits under the provisions of this Act, and (2) shall maintain in full force and effect during the term of such contract, subcontract, or subordinate contract, or while employees are engaged in work performed thereunder, the said security for the payment of such compensation and benefits, but nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to apply to any employee of such contractor or subcontractor who is engaged exclusively in furnishing materials or supplies under his contract;

(5) under a contract approved and financed by the United States or any executive department, independent establishment, or agency thereof (including any corporate instrumentality of the United States), or any subcontract or subordinate contract with respect to such contract, where such contract is to be performed outside the continental United States, under the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended (other than title II of chapter II thereof unless the Secretary of Labor, upon the recommendation of the head of any department or other agency of the United States, determines a contract financed under a successor provision of any successor Act should be covered by this section), and not otherwise within the coverage of this section, and every such contract shall contain provisions requiring that the contractor (and subcontractor or subordinate contractor with respect to such contract) (A) shall, before commencing performance of such contract, provide for securing to or on behalf of employees engaged in work under such contract the payment of compensation and other benefits under the provisions of this Act, and (B) shall maintain in full force and effect during the term of such contract, subcontract, or subordinate contract, or while employees are engaged in work performed thereunder, the said security for the payment of such compensation and benefits, but nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to apply to any employee of such contractor or subcontractor who is engaged exclusively in furnishing materials or supplies under his contract;

(6) outside the continental United States by an American employer providing welfare or similar services for the benefit of the Armed Forces pursuant to appropriate authorization by the Secretary of Defense;

irrespective of the place where the injury or death occurs, and shall include any injury or death occurring to any such employee during transportation to or from his place of employment, where the employer or the United States provides the transportation or the cost thereof.

(b) Definitions.

As used in this section—

(1) the term “public work” means any fixed improvement or any project, whether or not fixed, involving construction, alteration, removal or repair for the public use of the United States or its allies, including but not limited to projects or operations under service contracts and projects in connection with the national defense or with war activities, dredging, harbor improvements, dams, roadways, and housing, as well as preparatory and ancillary work in connection therewith at the site or on the project;

(2) the term “allies” means any nation with which the United States is engaged in a common military effort or with which the United States has entered into a common defensive military alliance;

(3) the term “war activities” includes activities directly relating to military operations;

(4) the term “continental United States” means the States and the District of Columbia.

(c) Liability as exclusive.

The liability of an employer, contractor (or any subcontractor or subordinate subcontractor with respect to the contract of such contractor) under this Act shall be exclusive and in place of all other liability of such employer, contractor, subcontractor, or subordinate contractor to his employees (and their dependents) coming within the purview of this Act, under the workmen’s compensation law of any State, Territory, or other jurisdiction, irrespective of the place where the contract of hire of any such employee may have been made or entered into.

(d) Definition of contractor.

As used in this section, the term “contractor” means any individual, partnership, corporation, or association, and includes any trustee, receiver, assignee, successor, or personal representative thereof, and the rights, obligations, liability, and duties of the employer under such Longshoremen’s and Harbor Workers’ Compensation Act shall be applicable to such contractor.

(e) Contracts within section; waiver of application of section.

The liability under this Act of a contractor, subcontractor, or subordinate contractor engaged in public work under subparagraphs (3) and (4), subdivision (a) of this section, and the conditions set forth therein, shall become applicable to contracts and subcontracts

heretofore entered into but not completed at the time of the approval of this Act, and the liability under this Act of a contractor, subcontractor, or subordinate contractor engaged in performance of contracts, subcontracts, or subordinate contracts specified in subparagraph (5), subdivision (a) of this section, and the conditions set forth therein, shall hereafter be applicable to the remaining terms of such contracts, subcontracts, and subordinate contracts entered into prior to but not completed on the date of enactment of any successor Act to the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended, and contracting officers of the United States are authorized to make such modifications and amendments of existing contracts as may be necessary to bring such contracts into conformity with the provisions of this Act. No right shall arise in any employee or his dependent under subparagraphs (3) and (4) of subdivision (a) of this section, prior to two months after the approval of this Act. Upon the recommendation of the head of any department or other agency of the United States, the Secretary of Labor, in the exercise of his discretion, may waive the application of this section with respect to any contract, subcontract, or subordinate contract, work location under such contracts, or classification of employees. Upon recommendation of any employer referred to in paragraph (6) of subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary of Labor may waive the application of this section to any employee or class of employees of such employer, or to any place of employment of such an employee or class of employees.

(f) Liability to prisoners of war and protected persons.

The liability under this Act of a contractor, subcontractor, or subordinate contractor engaged in public work under paragraphs (1), (2), (3), and (4), of subsection (a) of this section or in any work under subparagraph (5) of subsection (a) of this section does not apply with respect to any person who is a prisoner of war or a protected person under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and who is detained or utilized by the United States.

SECTION 2. COMPUTATION OF BENEFITS: APPLICATION TO ALIENS AND NONNATIONALS

(a) The minimum limit on weekly compensation for disability, established by section 6(b), and the minimum limit on the average weekly wages on which death benefits are to be computed, established by section 9(e) of the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, shall not apply in computing compensation and death benefits under this Act.

(b) Compensation for permanent total or permanent partial dis-

ability under section 8(c)(21) of the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, or for death under this Act to aliens and nonnationals of the United States not residents of the United States or Canada shall be in the same amount as provided for residents, except that dependents in any foreign country shall be limited to surviving wife and child or children, or if there be no surviving wife or child or children, to surviving father or mother whom the employee has supported, either wholly or in part, for the period of one year immediately prior to the date of the injury, and except that the Secretary of Labor may, at his option or upon the application of the insurance carrier shall, commute all future installments of compensation to be paid to such aliens or nonnationals of the United States by paying or causing to be paid to them one-half of the commuted amount of such future installments of compensation as determined by the Secretary.

SECTION 3. COMPENSATION DISTRICTS: JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

(a) The Secretary of Labor is authorized to extend compensation districts established under the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, or to establish new compensation districts, to include any area to which this Act applies; and to assign to each such district one or more deputy commissioners, as the Secretary may deem necessary.

(b) Judicial proceedings provided under sections 18 and 21 of the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act in respect to a compensation order made pursuant to this Act shall be instituted in the United States district court of the judicial district wherein is located the office of the deputy commissioner whose compensation order is involved if his office is located in a judicial district, and if not so located, such judicial proceedings shall be instituted in the judicial district nearest the base at which the injury or death occurs.

SECTION 4. PERSONS EXCLUDED FROM BENEFITS

This Act shall not apply in respect to the injury or death of (1) an employee subject to the provisions of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act; (2) an employee engaged in agriculture, domestic service, or any employment that is casual and not in the usual course of the trade, business, or profession of the employer; and (3) a master or member of a crew of any vessel.

SECTION 5. THIS ACT MAY BE CITED AS THE "DEFENSE BASE ACT"